

Testimony by Benjamin Parady
On behalf of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board
Before the Appropriations Committee
IN OPPOSITION TO:
The Governor's proposed budget cuts for fiscal year 2016-17
March 6, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished Senators and Representatives of the Appropriations Committee,

I feel obligated to point out the hypocrisy of the Governor's budget proposal as it relates to pledges of support for the Mentally Ill. As a person with a mental illness, I am an Advocate for the disabled and The Chair of a North Central Regional Mental Health Board Catchment Area Council. The Regional Mental Health Boards give a voice, a direction and support to individuals dealing with a mental illness but also a place to turn for families and loved ones when they need answers and support. What about the person just coming to realize that they are in need of help? Doctors are great but what if it is a holiday or weekend? An Emergency Room while helpful for medical situations are not the best answer historically for those dealing with mental health issues. I have been there in a dark room with a handful of pills or a knife to my throat feeling that there is nowhere to turn. I have attempted to kill myself. I have spent many nights when I could not stop my mind from flying from one thought to the next when if sleep came it was not helpful and only made things worse. The constant mental turmoil and lack of sleep caused a downward spiral impossible to escape or control. I eventually found the help that I needed. What my therapist started Advocacy Unlimited and The Regional Mental Health Board finished. What about 211 or "warm lines" all great ideas however without a human face and voice of someone who has been there and can look into your eyes many will be lost or dead before either of those can be effective. Would it be cost effective if the mentally ill who have no other place to go

wander the streets? What if they self-medicate? What problems and what is the cost to the person and the state? The clubhouses do more than you all think.

The Mental Health Boards, Catchment Area Councils and The Clubhouses do more to affect a positive outcome in a potential mental health crisis than hospitals, Emergency Medical Services or 211. I am not saying that these services cannot have positive outcomes, because they can and do. But I respectfully point out that the combined cost will be more than the cost of what the Governor has proposed to cut. And if you all agree to those cuts you will be reversing the measures that everyone endorsed and vowed support of in the Legislature's and Governor's Sandy Hook reports and the promises made when the Mental Health Facilities were closed. Some will also be reversing promises made while running for election or re-election. So many promises.

Why make one group of people who are already unjustly feared and in some cases condemned bear another burden with nowhere to turn in a landscape already dark? Will you join us in the dark corners or little rooms as we who have been there ourselves try to help those you vowed to support?

Thank you for the opportunity to address you please find a different way.